

IN THE CLAIMS

The following claim listing replaces all prior claim listings:

1. (Currently Amended) A digital signal processing method for reproducing digital signals comprising the steps of:

storing a data block to be used repeatedly at least twice out of a plurality of data blocks obtained at least by dividing a digital signal on a time base, said data block being stored separately from said remaining data blocks;

receiving information indicating the period of time during which said data block is retained, wherein the period of time is related to each use of said data block; and

deleting said data block based on said information.

2. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said digital signal is taken into a recording medium by way of a network before it is reproduced.

3. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said digital signal is stored in a recording medium in advance.

4. (Cancelled).

5. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein the period of time begins when said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice is read in.

6. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said information indicates the number of times of reading other data after reading in said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice.

7. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein the period of time begins when the overall processing operation starts.

8. (Cancelled).

9. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein the period of time begins when said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice is reproduced for the first time.

10. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said information is added to said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice as part thereof.

11. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice is deleted when the processing operation for reproducing the digital signal is over.

12. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein if the retaining period of time indicated by said information is shorter than the time necessary for actually reproducing said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice, said data block is deleted when the operation of reproducing said data block is over.

13. (Previously Presented) A digital signal processing method according to claim 1, wherein said data blocks to which said information is not added are deleted when the processing operation of reproducing them is over.

14. (Previously Presented) A digital processing method according to claim 1, wherein when said information is expressed by a predetermined bit string, said data block to be

used repeatedly at least twice is retained until time when the processing operation of reproducing all the data blocks is over.

15. (Previously Presented) A digital signal reproducing apparatus for reproducing digital signals, comprising:

a first decoding means for separating a data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from the remaining data blocks of a plurality of data blocks obtained at least by dividing a digital signal on a time basis and decoding said data block, wherein said first decoding means extracts information indicating the period of time during which said data block is retained, wherein the period of time is related to each use of said data block;

a retaining means for temporarily retaining said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from said first decoding means separately from said remaining data blocks;

a second decoding means for decoding said remaining data blocks from said first decoding means and said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from said retaining means; and

control means for deleting said data block from said retaining means based on said information.

16-17. (Cancelled).

18. (Previously Presented) A digital signal reproducing apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said second decoding means decodes each of said data blocks, using identification information for identifying each of said data blocks.

19. (Previously Presented) A digital signal reproducing apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said second decoding means decodes each of said data blocks, using said identification information and additionally reproduction timing information.

20-24. (Cancelled).

25. (Currently Amended) A program recording medium carrying a recorded program comprising:

a first decoding step of separating a data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from the remaining data blocks of a plurality of data blocks obtained by dividing a digital signal on a time basis and decoding said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice;

a retaining step of temporarily storing said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from said first decoding step separately from said remaining data blocks;

a second decoding step of decoding said remaining data blocks from said first decoding step and said data block to be used repeatedly at least twice from said retaining step; and

a deleting step of deleting said data block based on information indicating the period of time during which said data block is retained.